

Research Guide

North Africa



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This guide offers brief descriptions of material held in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives relating to operations in North Africa during World War Two, 1940-1943. Further biographical information about each of the individuals named and complete summary descriptions of the papers held here may be consulted on the Centre's website (see contact details on the back page), where information about the location of the Centre, opening hours and how to gain access may also be found. New collections are being added all the time, so please visit the website regularly.

Individual collections

ALLFREY, Lt Gen Sir Charles (1895-1964)

General Officer Commanding 5 Corps, North Africa and Italy 1942-1944; General Officer Commanding British Troops in Egypt 1944-1948

Typescript diary, operational reports and papers relating to the Tunisian campaign, 1942-3, including Operations BLADEFORCE and BIZERTE (December 1942)

ANDERTON, Col Geoffrey (1902-1981)

Assistant Director of Medical Services, 1 Division, Tunisia and Italy, 1939-1945

Typescript report, printed map of Tunisia and papers relating to the First Division's activities in Tunisia, 1943

BISHOP, Maj Gen Sir Alexander (1897-1984)

Chief Staff Officer, East and North and West Africa 1939-1943

Typescript memoirs covering his life and career, including service in Africa, 1939-1943

BLOUNT, Lt Col Herbert (1910-1979)

Served with 9 Armoured Brigade Group, 1942

Reports on 9 Armoured Brigade Group during the second Battle of El Alamein, Egypt, 1942

BOYS-SMITH, Capt Humphrey, RN (1904-1999)

Commander of HMS SPEY, 1942-1943

Memoirs, including account of Allied landings in North Africa, November 1942

BROOKE, FM A F, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookeborough (1883-1963)

Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1941-1946

Personal diaries, 1939-1946; semi-official files and correspondence as CIGS, 1941-1946, including correspondence with Gen Sir Archibald Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, 1939-1941; FM Sir Harold Alexander, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, 1942-1943; Gen Sir Bernard Montgomery, Commander, 8 Army, 1942-1943, and Gen Sir Kenneth Anderson, Commander, 1 Army, North Africa, 1942-1943

CADELL, Air Cdre Colin (1905-1996)

Chief Signals Officer, Middle East, Cairo, 1943

Memoir relating to his RAF career, 1925 to 1945

CAUNTER, Brig J A L (1889-1981)

Commander, Armoured Brigade, Egypt, 1939-1941, and 4 Armoured Brigade, 7 Armoured Division, Western Desert campaign, 1940-1941

Photographs and papers relating to the First Libyan Campaign, 1940-1941, particularly the Battle of Beda Fomm, Libya, February 1941

CREAGH, Maj Gen Sir Michael (1892-1970)

General Officer Commanding 7 Armoured Division, Western Desert, 1939-1941

Reports, correspondence and maps relating to operations in the Western Desert, 1940-1941, especially the Battles of Sidi Saleh and Beda Fomm, and Operation BATTLEAXE, the attempt to relieve Tobruk, Libya, 1941

CRIBB, Col R D (1908-1986)

Lieutenant, 121 Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery, Western Desert, 1941-1943

Personal and typescript Unit diaries relating to service in the Western Desert and Tunisia, 1941 and 1943

DANIELL, Brig R B T (1901-1996)

Second in Command, South Nottinghamshire Hussars, 1940-1942

Account of service in Egypt and Libya, 1940-1942, including the Battle of the Cauldron, Gazala Bir Hachem, Libya, 1942

DE GUINGAND Maj Gen Sir Francis (1900-1979)

Chief of Staff, 8 Army, 1942-1944

Maps, memoranda and plans relating to 8 Army operations in the Western Desert and Egypt, in particular, plans for Operations LIGHTFOOT, SUPERCHARGE and GRAPESHOT, the three distinct phases of the Battle of El Alamein, 1942

DICKENS, Adm Sir Gerald (1879-1962)

Flag Officer, Tunisia, 1943-1945

Manuscript war diary; and official and personal correspondence

DIVERS, Brig S T (1896-1979)

Commanding Officer, 50 Div, Royal Army Service Corps, 1940-1942, and Deputy Director Supply and Transport, 10 Corps, North Africa, 1942-1943

Account, 'Left hook at Mareth', concerning the North African campaign, 1943, written in 1948

EDGELL, Lt Col P M (1906-1997)

Commanded 345 Company, Royal Army Service Corps, 1942-1945

Account, 'The five years of 345 Coy RASC (Royal Army Service Corps), from Baquba to Trieste, 1940-1945', recounting of Edgell's experiences in North Africa, including the siege of Tobruk, Libya, written in 1990

GALE, Lt Gen Sir Humfrey (1890-1971)

Chief Administrative Officer, European Theatre of Operations, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, 1942-1945

Diaries, 1942-1945; office files relating to his service as Chief Administrative Officer, 1944-1945; five printed volumes of 'History of the Allied Forces Headquarters, Parts I-II'

GRAVES, Robert (1895-1985)

Poet and author

Account, 'Historical note on the defence plan that foiled Rommel's invasion of Egypt in 1942 - by the officer who designed it', by Maj Gen E E Dorman Smith, written in 1943

HELLY, Brig Alfred (1902-1990)

Commander, 60 Field Regiment, Western Desert, 1941-1942

Account of his career, including action around Sidi Rezegh, Libya, November 1941

HIGNETT, Lt Col John (1900-1994)

Served with Royal Hussars, North Africa, 1940-1943

Official photographs of the North African campaign, World War Two

HINGSTON, Lt Col Walter (1905-1993)

General Staff Officer, 4 Indian Division, Western Desert, 1940-1941

Letter home, 16 December 1940, giving a detailed and uncensored account of Operation COMPASS, the First Western Desert campaign, 6-16 December 1940

HOBART, Maj Gen Sir Percy (1885-1957)

Removed from command of the Armoured Div (subsequently 7 Armoured Div), Egypt, 1939; recalled to Army on personal intervention of Winston Churchill, 1941; General Officer Commanding 11 Armoured Div, UK, 1941-1942

Report on 7 Armoured Div ('The Desert Rats') and Operation BATTLEAXE, the attempt to relieve Tobruk, June 1941; account of 7 Armoured Div operations in Libya, November 1941 – January 1941, by Maj Gen W H E ('Strafer') Gott, General Officer Commanding 7 Armoured Div; sketch maps, printed maps and lecture notes, concerning 7 Armoured Div operations, Libya, 1941-1942

HOBDAY, Brig Rupert (1894-1977)

General Staff Officer, Egypt, 1937-1941

Lecture on the Libyan campaign, 1940-1941; circulars issued by Advanced Western Desert Force General Staff concerning the advance to Sidi Barrani, 6 December 1940

HOLMAN, Capt A W (1910-1988)

Served with Army Dental Corps, North Africa and Italy, 1943-1945

Diaries of Holman's military service in North Africa, and photographs of Egypt

KIRKMAN, Gen Sir Sidney (1895-1982)

Brigadier, Royal Artillery, 18 Army Group, 1943

Diaries, including service in North Africa, April-May 1943

LAYCOCK, Maj Gen Sir Robert (1907-1968)

Commanded Special Service Brigade "Layforce", February-August 1941, and Middle East Commando, August 1941-August 1942; commanded Special Service Brigade, organizing and training all commandos in Britain, 1942-1943

Notes on the lessons learned from Operation ADDITION, the evacuation of British troops from Bardia, Libya, April 1941; correspondence and reports, 1943, concerning Operation TORCH, for the Allied invasion of North West Africa, 1942

LEAKEY, Maj Gen A R (1915-1999)

Navigator and Intelligence Officer, 4 Armoured Bde, 4 Armoured Bde Headquarters, 1939-1940; commanded tank squadron, Libya, 1940; Staff Officer, 10 Army Headquarters and General Staff Officer Grade 2, 7 Armoured Div, 1941-1942; transferred to Indian Army Bde, Iran, 1942-1943; returned to North Africa to command B Sqn, 3 Royal Tank Regt, 1943

Memoir, including details of service in North Africa and Western Desert, 1939-1943

LIDDELL HART, Capt Sir Basil (1895-1970)

Military theorist, writer and publicist

Extensive correspondence with, and notes on conversations with, many senior British military commanders who served in or wrote upon the Western Desert and North Africa campaigns, including FM Sir Claude Auchinleck, Maj Gen E E Dorman-Smith (later Maj Gen E E Dorman-O'Gowan), Maj Gen Sir Percy Hobart and FM Viscount Montgomery of Alamein; correspondence relating to The Rommel Papers (Collins, London, 1953), including correspondence with the family of FM Erwin Rommel, and with German Army commanders Gen Franz Halder, Lt Gen Alfred Gause, and Gen Siegfried Westphal; correspondence relating to The Tanks: the history of the Royal Tank Regiment (Cassell, London, 1959), including comment on armoured operations in North Africa; themed press cuttings, maps and battle plans relating to North Africa

LINSELL, Lt Gen Sir Wilfred (1884-1973)

In charge of Administration, Middle East Forces, 1942-1943

'Notes on the maintenance of the Eighth Army and the supporting Royal Air Force by land, sea and air from El Alamein to Tunisia', compiled by 'Q' staff, Middle East Forces General Headquarters, Cairo, 1943

McKEE, Lt Col Jock (1916-1981)

Served with 'A' Force, Western Desert, 1942

Accounts of his escape from a POW camp in Libya, 1942, and of service with 'A' Force, a special unit involved in escape operations in the Western Desert

McNEILL, Maj Gen J M (1909-1996)

On staff, 8 Army General Headquarters, 1943

'Eighth Army training memorandum No 1' by Lt Gen Bernard Law Montgomery, General Officer Commanding 8 Army, Middle East Forces [1942]; draft chapter for an unfinished book, 'Air support in North Africa, Pantellaria, and Sicily, 1942-1943', written in [1946]; account, 'Air support in the desert: an account of the use of air forces in support of the Army from the Gazala battles in 1942 to the end in Tunisia', written by Roy Smith, 1988

METSON, Dr G H (1907-1981)

Commander, 11 Unit, Lines of Communication Signals, North Africa, 1942-1943

Signal instructions, intelligence summaries, maps and diagrams relating to wireless communication in North Africa, October 1942, in preparation for Operation TORCH, for the Allied invasion of North West Africa, November 1942; notes by Metson as Commander, 11 Unit, on Operation DECIBEL, for the setting up of signal communications in Bizerta and Tunis, April 1943

MOCKLER-FERRYMAN, Brig E E (1896-1978)

Head of Intelligence Section, Allied Force HQ, North Africa, 1942-1943

Lecture on the planning and execution of the Allied invasion of North Africa, 1942, written c 1970

NELSON, Maj Gen Sir John (1912-1993)

Major, 3 Bn, Grenadier Guards, North Africa, 1942-1943

Memoir, 'Always a Grenadier', including an account of his service in North Africa, written in 1982

NELSON, Sqn Ldr Thomas (1915-1999)

Served with 37 Sqn, Western Desert, 1942

Article, 'A Desert Landing', published in 1948, recounting his crash landing in the Western Desert, 18 September 1942, subsequent capture by German forces, and imprisonment as a POW in Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany, where he assisted in the mass escape of 76 Allied airmen, March 1944

OLDFIELD, Maj P C (1910-2002)

Head of Army Aerial Photographic Interpretation Unit, General Headquarters, Middle East, 1941; transferred, 1942, to 'L' Detachment, Special Air Brigade, North Africa, led by Maj David Stirling; POW, Italy, 1943-1944

Diary, June-November, 1941; account of Oldfield's World War Two career compiled by his family, c 2002

O'CONNOR, Gen Sir Richard (1889-1981)

Commander, 7 Div, Mersa Metruh Fortress, Egypt, 1939-1940; Commander, Western Desert Force, 1940; General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Troops in Egypt, 1941; captured and imprisoned in Castle Vincigliata, Italy, 1941

Correspondence relating to planning the defence of the Western Desert Region, 1939-1940; correspondence, memoranda and notes relating to the First Libyan campaign, 1940-1941; detailed account of the First Libyan Campaign by O'Connor, written as a POW, Italy, 1941-1943; account, by Lt Gen Philip Neame, Military Governor of Cyrenaica, 'Operations in Cyrenaica from 27th Feb 1941 when Lt Gen P Neame assumed command until his capture on 7th April 1941'; account of First Libyan Campaign by Lt Col J F B Combe, Commander, 11 Hussars, written c 1960

PRENTICE, Maj Ronald (1913-1980)

Served in General Headquarters, Middle East Command, Cairo, 1942

Field book kept while at Middle East Command Headquarters, 1942, including notes on Long Range Desert Group operations, Western Desert, April 1942, including mention of Count László Almásy's role as a German guide during Operation SALAAM, the German espionage mission from Libya through Allied lines

ROBERTS, Maj Gen G P B (1906-1997)

Commanded 3 Royal Tank Regt, 7 Armoured Div, 8 Army, Western Desert, 1941

Memoranda, typescript intelligence summaries and typescript and manuscript notes, relating to 22 Guards Bde and 7 Armoured Div, North Africa, June 1941

SAINTY, Christopher (1900-1977)

Chief Engineer and Director of Carrier Engineering Co Ltd, 1942-1944

Notes, calculations and sketches made by Sainty while designing sand eliminators and air filters for tanks, 1943-1944

SALMON, Lt Col H M (1892-1985)

Commander, RAF Regiment Units, North Africa, 1942

Operational logs, correspondence, memoranda, movement orders and deployment plans relating to RAF Regiment Units, North Africa, 1941-1942, particularly Operation TORCH, for the Allied invasion of North West Africa, 1942

SYM, Col John (1907-1980)

Served with 2 Seaforth Highlanders, North Africa 1942-1943

Memoir of service with 2 Seaforth Highlanders in North Africa, 1942-1943, including the second Battle of El Alamein, 23 October to 4 November 1942

THORNHILL, Lt Col E B (1890-1998)

Second in command, 2 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, 8 Army, Western Desert, 1942

Memoir, including service in North Africa, notably the Second Battle of El Alamein, October to November 1942

VEASEY, Capt R F, RN (1883-1964)

Divisional Sea Transport Officer, Port Said, Egypt, 1943

Letters from Capt Veasey to his wife, 1940-1943

Miscellaneous, microfilm and microfiche

MICROFICHE MFF 8

Armed Forces Oral Histories: US Army Senior Officer Oral Histories

Themed collection of 96 interviews of senior US Army personnel, made 1971-1986, including Gen Mark Clark, with comment on his service as Commander, US 2 Corps, on liaison duties with French forces in North Africa, 1942

MISC 48

German Surrender Terms, Tunisia, 1943

Letter (in German) from German Air Force Generalleutnant Carl Köchy, Airfield District Commandant, Tunis, surrendering to Maj Gen J L I Hawkesworth, Commander, 46 Div, 13 May 1943

History of 30 Assault Unit, 1942-1946

Papers used by David Nutting and James Glanville in preparing their book, *Attain by surprise: the story of 30 Assault Unit Royal Navy/Royal Marine Commando and of Intelligence by capture* (David Colver, Chichester, West Sussex, 1997), giving the history of the 30 Assault Unit, an intelligence unit which undertook covert infiltrations into enemy territory including North Africa. Includes typescript memoirs and correspondence from former members of the unit

MISC 72

Publications relating to the British Army in North Africa and Italy during World War Two

Includes *The Two Types*, a cartoon book distributed to Allied forces in North Africa and *The Story of 46 Division*, 1939-1945

MICROFILM MF 111-160

Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, part 1: 1942-1945

Documents of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, World War Two, including memoranda and operational reports relating to Operation TORCH, for the invasion of North West Africa, November 1942

MICROFICHE MFF ULTRA 1-139

ULTRA: British Intelligence Messages based on decoded German Signals, 1941-1945

Decrypted teleprinter messages relating to operational intelligence from intercepted German and Italian radio communications, 1941-1945

MICROFICHE MFF 1

War Cabinet Minutes (HMSO) 1939-1945

Themed collection of the minutes of the War Cabinet Meetings, September 1939 - July 1945, including Anglo-American preparations for Operation TORCH, for the invasion of North West Africa, November 1942

MISC 41

War Neuroses in North Africa, 1943

A study prepared for the US Air Surgeon's Office, relating to neuropsychiatric casualties encountered by medical officers during World War Two generally, with particular reference to the Tunisian Campaign, 1943

MISC 26

War Office instructional booklets on the German Army, 1941-1943

Booklets published by the War Office, 1941-1943, providing British Army personnel with details of Germany Army field service uniforms, insignia, armour, weaponry and tactics. These include 'Periodical Notes on the German Army', which discusses German Army tactics in Libya, 1941

MICROFILM MF 460-462

Wartime Conferences of the Combined Chiefs of Staff

Minutes of meetings for the major conferences of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1941-1945, including reports relating to Operation TORCH, for the invasion of North West Africa, November 1942

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Front cover: Kittyhawks protecting
a supply route, North Africa, from the papers
of Lt Col J D Hignett (ref: Hignett)